



# **Start Talking Before They Start Drinking**

## **Communication Tools for the 6th Grade**

**A skill-building, critical-thinking program to  
prevent underage alcohol use**

### **Welcome, Teachers:**

Your 6th-grade students are on the brink of the complex world of adolescence. As they begin to navigate through this world they will face challenges that will require the strong foundation of **critical-thinking skills, life skills, and communication skills** if they are to succeed.

The **Reach Out Now: Start Talking Before They Start Drinking** program provides strategies for teachers and families to build communication and critical-thinking skills toward raising awareness and prevention of underage alcohol use.

**Each day, more than 10,000 young people between the ages of 12-20 take their first drink.**<sup>1</sup> That statement is more than just an alarming statistic. For teachers like you across the nation, and the students, schools, and communities you serve every day, it represents a very real problem.

This teaching program includes **in-school lessons** as well as **take-home activities** that students can do with their families. Teach this program to reach out now and start talking to your students. It will make a difference in their lives and in their learning.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

# Lesson Overviews

Below you'll find three lesson overviews for teachers, which also incorporate the activity reproducibles on pages 3 & 4.

## Lesson 1

### What Your Students Know—and Don't Know—About Alcohol

Standards for the English Language Arts 3, 5, 7, 12

**Lesson Objectives:** Students will learn:

- How alcohol affects the bodies and brains of youths
- How research at reliable Web sites can help answer their questions about alcohol and other topics

**Overview:** A public service ad introduces students to the topic of *alcohol* and *underage alcohol use*. A quiz about the effects of alcohol provides the spark for a discussion of facts about underage alcohol use.

**Key Talking Points:** Because adolescents' bodies and brains are still developing, alcohol affects them differently than it affects adults.<sup>2</sup> Knowing the facts about alcohol's effects is a key factor in the healthy decisions your students make.

**Time Required:** 40 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Copies of Reproducible 1, pen and paper, Internet access

#### Directions:

1. To introduce the topic of alcohol, visit [www.stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov) and play the "Start Talking About Drinking" public service ads (see links on right side of the Web page). Discuss with students what they know about *alcohol*. Discuss any unfamiliar words or concepts in the ads. What do students think are some of the effects of alcohol on a person?
2. Distribute copies of the reproducible. Review the directions for Part 1. Define unfamiliar words. Provide 10–15 minutes for students to complete the quiz. Review students' responses to Part 1. Reveal that all answers are **True**. Divide the class into groups of four or five students.
3. Ask each group to designate a "researcher" to investigate the facts behind questions 6 and 7 on the Internet at [www.family.samhsa.gov/stop/default.aspx](http://www.family.samhsa.gov/stop/default.aspx). The researchers will then share the facts with their groups.
4. Review the directions for Part 2. Have members of each group respond to the discussion questions among themselves and then share their responses with the class.

## Lesson 2

### What Students Can Say (When Faced with Choices)

Standards for the English Language Arts 3, 5, 12

**Lesson Objectives:** Students will learn:

- To interpret hypothetical situations requiring choices
- To use facts to support choices

**Overview:** After reading scenarios about underage alcohol use, students talk in small groups about their responses to the questions. In their responses they should draw on facts about alcohol's effects, and then share their responses with the whole class.

**Key Talking Point:** Facts about alcohol's effects on young people should be a part of discussions of underage alcohol. (Review Reproducible Activity 1.)

**Time Required:** 40 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Copies of Reproducible 1 and 2, pen and paper

#### Directions:

1. Divide the class into groups of four or five students.
2. Distribute Reproducible Activity 2 and go over the directions. Read the first scenario aloud.
3. Explain that in small groups students will choose the best answer and then respond to the **Talk About It** sections for each scenario. Remind them to review the facts on the **What Do You Know About Alcohol?** reproducible to help them decide what to say.
4. After student groups have considered both scenarios, have them share their responses with the class.
5. Student volunteers can develop dialogue and act out each scenario for the whole class.

Share this program! For printable copies, please visit [www.teachin.samhsa.gov](http://www.teachin.samhsa.gov).

## Lesson 3

### What Your Students Can Do

Standards for the English Language Arts 3, 5, 12

**Lesson Objectives:** Students will learn:

- Strategies to identify positive actions they can take as an alternative to alcohol

**Overview:** Students learn about positive actions other young people are making and then discuss their own actions.

**Key Talking Points:** By talking about and considering the many positive things kids do, students will understand that they have a positive alternative to alcohol.

**Time Required:** 40 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Pen and paper

#### Directions:

1. Discuss with students: *Can you think of some examples of kinds of choices that kids in your community are making to create a positive difference in their lives and in the lives of others? What kinds of positive things are kids doing instead of using alcohol?* (Some examples might include sports, community service, fund-raising, disaster relief, creative arts, working with younger kids, working with senior citizens.)
2. Ask students: *How can using alcohol impact your ability to achieve your goals?*
3. Have students write down on paper or in their journals: a) Positive Choices I'm Making Now; b) Positive Actions I Plan to Take to Achieve My Goals in the Future.

### Reach Out Now National Teach-In

For a further opportunity to reach students, families, and teachers about the dangers of underage alcohol use, SAMHSA is encouraging prominent national, state, and local leaders to conduct teach-ins for sixth-grade classrooms nationwide during the week of April 3–7, 2006, the first week of Alcohol Awareness Month. For more information, visit [www.teachin.samhsa.gov](http://www.teachin.samhsa.gov) or [www.stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov) or contact [gwyndolyn.ensley@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:gwyndolyn.ensley@samhsa.hhs.gov).

## For More Information

### For Adults and Parents

- [www.stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov)
- <http://family.samhsa.gov>
- [www.alcoholfreechildren.org](http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org)
- [www.ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov)
- [www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov](http://www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov)
- [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

### For Youth

- [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)

### Printable Publications

- [http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff\\_HTML/makediff.htm](http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/makediff.htm)
- [www.alcoholfreechildren.org/en/pubs/html/prev.htm](http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/en/pubs/html/prev.htm)

Spanish:

- [http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff\\_SpanHTML/SpanDiff.pdf](http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_SpanHTML/SpanDiff.pdf)

2. Aaron White, Ph.D., Dept. of Psychiatry, Duke University Medical Center, "Alcohol and the Adolescent Brain," 2004.

# What Do You Know About Alcohol?

## Part 1

### Take the Quiz

**Directions:** Circle “T” if the statement is true. Circle “F” if the statement is false.

1. A single drink of alcohol can affect you. <sup>3</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
2. Alcohol passes through the lining of the stomach into the bloodstream within 5 to 10 minutes. <sup>4</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
3. Alcohol moves through the bloodstream to every organ in the body. <sup>5</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
4. Drinking alcohol impairs the memory and learning ability of young people more than adults. <sup>6</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
5. Alcohol can have lasting effects on the developing brains of young people. <sup>7</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
6. Alcohol can kill you. <sup>8</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
7. Alcohol can hurt you even if you're not the one drinking. <sup>9</sup>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>

## Part 2

**Directions:** Follow your teacher's directions and answer the following questions. Write answers on the lines below and then share them in a discussion.

Learn more about alcohol's effects at these great Web sites:

- [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)
- [www.stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov)



1. Which statements in the quiz surprised you when you found out the answers? Why?
2. Does “knowing the facts” about something affect your decisions?
3. What would be a good way to present the facts about alcohol's effects to kids—through posters, songs, cartoons, TV ads, or...?
4. What do you think about the answers to questions 6 and 7 uncovered by your group's online research?

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# What Do You Say When You Have to Make a Decision About Underage Alcohol Use?

**Directions:** Read each scenario and decide on the best response (or add your own). On the lines below each scenario, summarize the pluses and minuses of each response.

## Scenario 1:

You and Sean are best friends. Last Saturday when you were at Sean's house his older brother Jay, an 8th grader, came home drunk in the middle of the afternoon. Their parents were out. Sean told you this happens a lot and that he's scared of Jay when he's drunk. You decide

- a. to say nothing to anyone.
- b. to encourage Sean to talk to his parents about Jay's drinking.
- c. to ask your parents what you can do about the situation.
- d. or... [your response].



**What are the possible outcomes of each response?**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

**My Decision:** \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_

**Talk About It:** Discuss your response with other students in your class.

## Scenario 2:

Michala, a popular athlete in your school, invites you to a party at her house. When you get there, she offers you a beer. You decide

- a. to refuse it, saying, "Aren't your parents home?"
- b. to refuse it, saying, "No, thanks."
- c. to refuse it, saying, "Alcohol is really bad for you."
- d. or... [your response].

**What are the possible outcomes of each response?**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

**My Decision:** \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_

**Talk About It:** Discuss your response with other students in your class.